

# Appendix 4

# **ADVICE TO WORKERS ON RECEIVING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE**

## **Advice to workers on receiving allegations of abuse**

Receiving allegations of abuse can be a very distressing experience.

The following is offered as practical guidance. Please familiarise yourself with it should you ever find yourself in the position of receiving an allegation of abuse.

Should you be in the position of receiving an allegation of abuse you may experience the feeling of denial. Denial can take various forms

- denial that anyone (maybe someone you know) could perpetrate abuse
- denial that what you have been told or seen could happen
- denial that experience has shown that children and young people are usually abused by someone known and trusted by them
- denial that something like this could happen within the Christian community

You need to be aware, if you are in a position of care for children and young people, that abuse can occur. Perpetrators of abuse (adults and young people themselves) will often prepare or groom their victims and those who work with them in order that they can be trusted. Once they have their victim's or your trust abuse can occur.

It is therefore very important that you take seriously what a child is or adult is telling you about abuse. The welfare of the child is the paramount concern – children, who are vulnerable, come first.

### **Do not**

- × Offer complete confidentiality unless you are a priest offering Sacramental Confession
- × Ask leading questions
- × Show shock or disbelief
- × Alert the alleged perpetrator
- × Try and investigate the allegations – that is a matter for social services and the police
- × Challenge their story
- × Assume the alleged perpetrator is innocent because of church involvement

### **Do**

- ✓ Reassure them - they are probably scared
- ✓ Assure them that they are not to blame
- ✓ Assure them that they were right to tell you
- ✓ Be aware that you may find the allegations hard to accept.
- ✓ Listen to them -allow them to speak freely
- ✓ Take time
- ✓ Believe them
- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Ensure that you record, report and refer the allegations according to the cathedral's policy
- ✓ Inform them that advice and counselling is available, if they want it
- ✓ Ask the Cathedral Child Protection Officer to find appropriate support for you